

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMCONSUL PESHAWAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 7448

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PK, PFOR, IR, IN

SUBJECT: PAKISTANI CONCERN OVER INDIAN RCD MEMBERSHIP

REF: TEHRAN 7096 (NHHAL), ISLAMABAD 6913

BEGIN SUMMARY: REFTELS REFLECT THE DELICATE BALANCE IN THE TRIANGULAR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIA, IRAN AND PAKISTAN. IRAN'S DECISION TO SEEK BETTER RELATIONS WITH INDIA AND ITS EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE PAKISTAN TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH INDIA HAVE RESULTED IN A POTENTIAL WITHIN PAKISTAN FOR GREAT POLITICAL STRAINS. THE ISSUE OF INDIA'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE RCD ENCAPSULATES THIS PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE GOP REALIZES THAT INDIAN AND IRANIAN POWER IN THE REGION HAVE INCREASED SINCE 1971, AND IN MANY WAYS NOW OVERSHADOW PAKISTAN. THE GOP VIEWS ITS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN AS INSURANCE THAT PAKISTAN'S INTERESTS IN THE AREA WILL NOT BE THREATENED BY A  
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PREEMINENT INDIA OR HARMED BY INCREASED INDIA, IRANIAN

COOPERATION. BHUTTO REALIZES IRAN HAS SEVERAL REASONS FOR SUPPORTING PAKISTAN - THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN OVER ANY EXPANSION OF INDIA'S (NUCLEAR) POWER AND INFLUENCE IN THE GREATER SUBCONTINENT AND INDIAN OCEAN REGION, ITS INTEREST IN PAKISTAN'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND THE SHAH'S CONCERNS ABOUT SOVIET DESIGNS IN SOUTH ASIA. THIS IRANIAN STANCE SUITS BHUTTO'S NEEDS AND HE NATURALLY WORRIES ABOUT THE POLITICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS IMPLICIT IN ANY CHANGE IN THIS RELATIONSHIP. THIS EXPLAINS THE SHARP NEGATIVE REACTION THROUGHOUT THE PAKISTANI POLITICAL SPECTRUM AGAINST THE IDEA OF USING PAKISTAN'S HIGHWAYS FOR THE TRANSIT OF INDO-IRANIAN TRADE; PAKISTANIS BELIEVE THEIR SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN ENTITLES THEM TO HIGHER STATUS THAN THAT OF A ROADWAY.

2. ONE OF THE MOST "SPECIAL" FEATURES OF THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND IRAN HAS BEEN THE RCD. ALTHOUGH THE ASSOCIATION HAS PRODUCED FEW IF ANY TANGIBLE RESULTS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO PAKISTANIS AS A GROUP OF MUSLIM BROTHERN STATES WITH STATED COMMON INTERESTS IN MUTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT. THE RELATIONSHIP ALSO SYMBOLIZES WHAT PAKISTAN CONSIDERS ITS EXCLUSIVE CONNECTION WITH IRAN; IN THE RCD PAKISTAN HAS ACTED AS AN EQUAL ALONGSIDE HER MORE-THAN-EQUAL PARTNER. IN REAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TERMS THE IRAN CONNECTION DEPENDS ON THE GOODWILL OF IRAN, AND PAKISTAN'S LEADERS KNOW THEY HAVE LITTLE LEVERAGE TO PREVENT IRANIAN INTERESTS OR SYMPATHIES FROM DEVOLVING FAVORS ON OTHERS. HOWEVER, ANY CHANGE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE RCD, ESPECIALLY ONE THAT MEANT INDIAN MEMBERSHIP, WOULD BE CRITICIZED IN PAKISTAN AS A MAJOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SETBACK. IT WOULD REQUIRE A POLICY ADJUSTMENT THAT WOULD BE AT A MINIMUM EXTREMELY EMBARRASSING TO EXPLAIN AT HOME AND AT WORST COULD FORCE A FUNDAMENTAL REALIGNING OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AND PROVIDE OPPOSITION PARTIES THE COMMON ISSUE THEY LACK IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY OR MEANINGFULLY OPPOSE PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S PPP. TO PREVENT THIS EVENTUALITY, BHUTTO COUNTS ON WHAT HE CONSIDERS HIS OWN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SHAH.

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3. FOR THE ABOVE REASONS THE ISSUE OF INDIAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE RCD IS NOT THE THROWAWAY ISSUE IN PAKISTAN THAT IT MAY BE IN IRAN. AS EARLY AS MAY 1976, THE URDU PRESS IN PAKISTAN HAD BEGUN TO COMMENT NEGATIVELY ABOUT STATEMENTS BY MRS. GANDHI ABOUT INDIA'S POTENTIAL MEMBERSHIP IN THE RCD. AT THE SAME TIME THE GOP WAS TAKING STEPS TO NORMALIZE ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA. OPPOSITION POLITICIANS IN PAKISTAN WERE QUICK TO SEIZE THE TWO ISSUES

AND SPEAK IN TERMS OF A SELL-OUT OR PLAIN BAD BARGAINING BY BHUTTO. THEREAFTER THE GOP RESORTED TO PUBLIC STATEMENTS AGAINST INDIA'S INCLUSION IN THE RCD TO STIFLE SUCH CRITICISM. WHEN BHUTTO COULD NOT PERSUADE HIS SPECIAL PARTNER, THE SHAH, TO PUBLICLY SUPPORT HIS STAND ON THIS ISSUE, HE HAD NO RECOURSE OTHER THAN MAKING THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE TOPIC.

4. BHUTTO'S CATEGORICAL STATEMENT DURING HIS JULY 8 TEHRAN PRESS CONFERENCE -- THAT UNTIL THE KASHMIR DISPUTE IS SETTLED TALK OF INDIAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE RCD IS PREMATURE AND COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE -- PUBLICLY VOICED AN APPREHENSION THAT THE PAKISTANI PRESS HAD SPECULATED WAS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE BRIEF BHUTTO PRESENTED TO THE SHAH. SINCE BHUTTO HAD ALREADY STATED HIS CASE PRIVATELY TO THE SHAH, THE REMARK WAS INTENDED FOR PAKISTAN'S DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION, AND IT WAS DETERMINED THE STATEMENT WOULD BEST BE MADE WHILE THE PRIME MINISTER WAS STILL IN IRAN.  
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